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THE NEW CITY OF GOD;

OR,

THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN FAITH

AS

A SOCIAL GOSPEL.

AN ADDRESS

FROM THE CHAIR OF THE

Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland,

AT THE

Autumnal Assembly in Buddersfield,

OCTOBER 3RD, 1888.

BY

JOHN CLIFFORD, M.A., D.D.

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THE NEW CITY OF GOD ;

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THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN FAITH AS A
SOCIAL GOSPEL.

At our recent annual gathering, Fathers and Brethren, I spoke on a subject already filling and controlling our minds—the Christian Gospel of the “Great Forty Years: its real substance and best defence”—so that I might do what I could to find the key to interpret aright the duty of the day, and open the sources of inspiration for its wise and faithful discharge.

This morning I am constrained to speak to you of *one* only of the various phases of this same comprehensive theme, in the hope that I may aid our churches in apprehending clearly the work that lies next us, and fulfilling the mission God gives us to the living, suffering, struggling and hoping men, women and children of our own and the coming generation.

No. I.

I feel I can scarcely be wrong in interpreting the chief anxieties and intenser yearnings of our Christian Societies. The agreement of those who read the “signs of the times” is complete. The trend of opinion and feeling is clear, strong and decisive. The air rings with proofs that social problems are supreme. Questions of social economics take the first rank, not only in the market, but also in the church; in the sanctuary, as well as the street; hardly more on the Exchange than in the University; in the literature of fiction and theology, poetry and politics. Sociology, as it is called,

is in one form or other the paramount practical Science, at home and abroad, in the old civilisations of Europe, and in the newer and rising civilisations of Japan, the United States, and the Colonies. The work of the dawning twentieth century will be the reconstruction of Society, another stage in the building of the New City of God, and to-day we are engaged quarrying new stones, reshaping old ones; trying them here and trying them there, preparatory to the actual building work, soon to begin.

Man, in his sharply defined and selfish individualism, is being superseded by mankind in co-operative communion and mutual beneficence. The idea of Humanity as a vital organism—itsself the creation and gift of the Christ—is in the ascendant instead of that of 1,400,000,000 of isolated and egoistic units. Men are not to be regarded as atoms, separate and distinct; but as living molecules of a living whole, capable of being moved by one spirit, ruled by one will, and worked to one end. The yearning of the age finds voice in the poet's cry—

“What one is,
Why may not millions be?”

and in the prayer of his brother singer,

“O God, give us no more giants,
Elevate the race.”

Ruskin, speaking to Art Students, says, with a strenuousness indicative of keen impatience with the unbelief of men, “I can get no soul to believe that the beginning of art is in getting *your country clean, and your people beautiful*,” and yet, he asseverates, “to get your country clean, and your people lovely is a necessary work of art to begin with.” Still more deliberately he recalls the opinion uttered twenty-two years before in the “Stones of Venice,” that “it is not possible to have any right, morality, happiness, or art, in any country where the cities are . . . clotted and coagulated; spots of a dreadful mildew, spreading by patches and blotches over the country they consume. You must have lovely cities, crystallised, not coagulated into form; limited in size, and not casting out the scum and scurf of them into an encircling eruption of shame,

but girded, each with its sacred pomærium, and with garlands of gardens full of blossoming trees, and softly guided streams.”*

A distinguished German authority, speaking of his own country, says :—“No one can any longer doubt that now, after an apparent cessation of hostility, the conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism has become more fierce than ever. Let us not, however, deceive ourselves; the decision will not be on the field of learned deductions, nor in the domain of dogmatic polemics; the decisive question is: Which church will gain the strongest influence over the life of the people? *The social problem is the field on which the decisive battle must be fought.*”

I will only add the testimony of Roswell D. Hitchcock, who, speaking for the United States thus pithily and with rich allusiveness, states the problem of the hour :—“Christianity triumphed over the Græco-Roman civilisation; has triumphed in mediæval and modern Europe; has, in short, conquered all the best races in history thus far. Now, can it conquer to the bottom, as it has already conquered to the top? Can it evangelize its own cities, going down into the cellars, up into the garrets of its own heathen at home? Hard as the task may be, Christianity stands squarely committed to it. If Christianity fails in this, its supreme endeavour, it is not of God. But it will not fail.”

II.

At the onset, then, it appears,—and this is as fundamental as it is initial, to a thorough investigation of our subject,—no mistake could be more wasteful and mischievous in itself, and more flagrantly anomalous in us, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, than to imagine that these social difficulties and endeavours are sordid and secular, of the earth, earthy, and altogether unfit for men who worship God, and look for immortality.

All social problems are spiritual at heart, pierce to the throbbing nerve of souls, concern shattered ambitions and broken

* Lectures on Art, pp. 142 and 151.

hearts, defeated energies and maimed lives, wasted efforts and blighted hopes, starving children and crushed old age, agonised women learning at death's door how they should have lived, and men educated in theft as if it were an accomplishment, and trained in vice as the readiest means of living; bitter despairs breeding weakness and wickedness and keen miseries that make darkness more welcome than light, and the grave the only gospel of rest. Are not these the things of the spirit? Do not the sorrows and sins, anxieties and agonies born of the monopoly of land, the exactions of landlords, the huddling of large families in town and city, the fierce race for riches—do they not carry us, if the heart of the Saviour and friend of the poor be not dead within us, to the very sanctuary of souls, to the throne of the Holy Ghost, and to the unspeakably sweet and welcome consolations of the Spirit of Jesus? For us there are no exclusively material problems. Man *is* spirit and has the world, as he has his body, as his dwelling place and school house, tool box and temple; and in the degree in which our aims are completely human, and directed to the absolute and universal best, we shall find our divinest duties in unravelling the tangled skein of life, helping to a juster distribution of the natural and appointed rewards of industry, abolishing the depraving and destructive fierceness of competition, lessening poverty so that it may only exist as the just punishment of indolence and guilty incapacity, drying up the sources of social vice, substituting wise and sustained personal sympathy for spasms of "charity," creating decent, chaste and comfort-bringing homes in the place of huts that generate impurity, and make the healing courtesies of life impossible; and thereby authorise again the forcible reply to those who question the validity of our mission, "Go your way, and tell John the things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he who shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me." There is no true service of God that is not a service of man. The New City of God is, and must be, the city of the new man.

III.

This Sociological problem being spiritual is not so *new* as it seems. In pith and substance it is as old as the selfish cry of the murderer of Abel—"Am I my brother's keeper?" The terms of some of the inquiries are fresh, and a little strange; but words are not things, and must not be mistaken for them. A new label does not make a new fact. A new medical description does not mean a new disease; a new phrase in theology is not of necessity a new heresy; nor are the words "Socialism," "Communism," "Nihilism," "Altruism," "Solidarity," representative of new facts or masses of facts. I wish we could remember that most children are born before they are named. The registrar is not a creator, but a recorder. Be not deceived: literature and grammar are old, but thought and speech are older. The body is more than raiment, and the soul more than both; indeed it is still—even in this material age—all in all. The new element is not the social difficulty, it is the Christ-begotten passion to face that difficulty calmly, patiently, with heroic thoughtfulness, determined to know what it means and in what ways it can most surely be conquered. The canker of misery has always eaten its way into our human commonwealth. No State has kept itself free from festering disease, stalking pestilence, gnawing lust, fierce oppressions, shameful neglect, a shrivelled and rotted humanity. Every town has its "East End." The long story of civilisation is, in chief, a record of the way in which societies of men have met and mastered, or been met and mastered by, their social problems.

It was sure to be so. The higher and more complete the organism the greater the difficulties attending its growth and perfection. Weeds grow apace. Roses require and reward scientific culture. Marionettes are easily worked; how prodigious the task of training a child and making a man! But society, could we only be persuaded to look into it, is the living miracle of Providence; with its "hierarchy of mutual service, its army of tamed passions, its invisible guard of ideal restraints, its traditions of heroism, its hopes of greatness, its sympathy with

"the moral life of the world." Verily, there is nothing more marvellous in the two Testaments—save and except Him who is the Creator and Redeemer of this wonderful order. We are at the very summit of organised existences, and, therefore, in the presence of the hugest difficulties and highest tasks for manly action.

Does not our Scripture history suggest this? It starts with Adam, the individual; but swiftly it passes to stories of Eve and Cain, and the emergence of the social life of man, with its fierce collisions of interests, its swift and sudden, seductive and tiger-like access of temptation, its murderous cruelty and gloomy moroseness born of selfish greed. Man makes man and mars him. Life antagonises and quickens life; but with great risks. Enlarge the area of action, increase the number of the actors from one to two, two to four, four to four thousand, four thousand to four millions, and your temptations and dangers are multiplied and aggravated beyond all conception and expression. Society has been, and is, the chief marvel of Providence, the deepest mystery of life, the Sphinx that threatens to devour the churches.

IV.

And never, I must add, was the threat urged more angrily on the collective conscience of the Anglo-Saxon world than just now; for the people who suffer are as conscious of their power as they are of their incredible oppressions and inherited miseries. Christianity has been preaching for generations the equality of "all men before the law"; and the unescapable corollary of that is the equality of all men in *making* the law. It is dangerous to preach that there "is no respect of persons with God," if you are not prepared to go as far as it will carry you. Your principle becomes your master, and leads you whither you would not. Universal justice is its gift, and Justice cannot see the rags of the poor or the glittering gold of the rich; knows nothing of the sceptre of the sovereign, or the empty purse of the beggar. Justice holds the scales with even hand, and acts with tremorless impartiality. The

principle is holy, just, good. It not only involves the doctrine of equality *before* the law—the only doctrine of equality that rests on the rock-basis of truth and fact—but also the necessary extension to the recognition of the right of the people to determine what the laws shall be. It creates a new Cæsar, not an Augustus or a Nero, a Charles the First or a Napoleon, but the people in their co-operative and representative capacities. It has done this, and already the stout-hearted are spoiled and the men of might have lost their hands. The quietly operative energy of the popular vote is at its revolutionary work, loosening the keystone of the arch of monopolies, lifting the “agricultural labourer” out of the mire, opening the doors of industry and opportunity to women, and weakening the existence of every social and political edifice that is built on wrong and force, instead of on right and freedom. Even the Bishop of Rochester says, “The zones of enormous wealth and degrading poverty, unless carefully considered, will presently generate a tornado, which, when the storm clears, may leave a good deal of wreckage behind.” It is the old argument of despotism! Shame on us that we should be ready to give to fear what we will not offer to Justice! Still the fear is not without reason; for the perils of sovereignty are not avoided because your Cæsar is a Democracy. Like most rulers, he, too, is in danger of thinking more of rights than of duties, of imposing fetters on freedom, forcing “progress” because he is strong, and trusting to machinery to do the work of life. But true-hearted men will strive to be true and just, considerate and helpful, and it may not be amiss if the prodigious energy now throbbing in the social heart should rouse the callous and unjust Pharaohs, and frighten them till they let God’s people go to the New Jerusalem He is preparing for them.

V.

These questions, moreover, derive increased urgency at the present moment, from the width and depth of the life of man, exposed with unprecedented fulness, and burning itself by its

bewildering confusions and helpless misery into the moral imagination of mankind as in no previous time. The public "wears its hearts upon its sleeve." The area of secrecy is narrowing more and more. Dumb suffering finds a tongue. Long silent anguish is vocal. Despair makes itself heard above the din of the reckless traffickers in the blood and muscle of their fellows for gain. Misery fascinates and compels attention. The tramp of the peoples of the earth is heard as they march to assert themselves, and to play their part in the larger affairs of the world. The kaleidoscope of life shows a thousand colours; its portentous heritage of incapacity and suffering, blighted infancy and cursed youth, sordid cares and divine visions, debased ideals and tantalising hopes, colossal difficulties and incalculable spiritual issues, mystery of waste and diabolical cruelties, infecting plague spots and shocking crimes. Sometimes it is "a tragedy in humble life" that peals like a tocsin through the stillness of our daily existence, and lays bare at once the injustice of our law and the selfish wickedness of men; now it is the lurid glare of a series of murders striking on the usually forgotten paths of the "fallen" that makes us stand aghast. Here and there a prophet speaks from the pulpit of the daily press and compels respectability to halt and consider; or the pen of fiction paints the depraving and destructive effects of being *out of work*; the shameful disproportion in the means of living between the highest and lowest "condition of men"; the woes of East End seamstresses, and the acuter pains of refined and delicate women, struggling to sustain a precarious existence. We cannot close our eyes any longer. Socrates told Crito that as the votaries of Cybele heard the flutes of the priests, so the voice of duty boomed in his ears and made him incapable of hearing anything else. In like manner there are times when over all the harmonious music of life the cries and groans of our suffering fellows force themselves upon us, and compel the lament of the prophet: "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" The Spirit is come "to convince the world" of its long and guilty

neglect; yea, to convince the churches of their sin in not undertaking with more definite purpose and sustained enthusiasm the greater and inclusive task of social salvation, and dealing effectively with the misery at their very doors, that goes on bitterly distrusting their Lord because they, His representatives, have so little, or so unwisely cared for the least of His brothers and sisters in their hunger, and poverty, and woe. Everything gravitates with accelerated energy round this social centre. Our old questions of theology and worship, of polity and service, are finding a new expression in the terms of our relations with one another, of fraternity and fellowship, equality and righteousness. We may not like it; but it is at our peril we resent it, for it is the unmistakable purpose of the Eternal to make a signal advance in the swiftly coming years in the building of the City of God. Resent it! Never! We are bound to welcome it with insight, study it with ardour, and work at it with enthusiasm. We must. Failure here will be disastrous. Lose that and we are lost, and all is lost. The bitterest ingredient in the cup of French misery is that her social progress has been mainly effected by men opposed to her churches and her religion. No more cruel fate befalls a people. Nothing so soon makes worship despicable, religion hated, God unreal, scepticism universal, a people disenchanting and destroyed. No scourge more effectually empties your sanctuaries of men or your homes of pure women. The *only* place of the Church of the Lord Jesus is *first* in all self-denying reforms, first in all unselfish service, in the van of every battle with iniquity; first in everything that prevents the waste of manhood, diminishes vice, promotes national well-being, and saves the souls of men.

VI.

But though we cannot refuse assent to the widespread demands for immediate attention, it must be confessed, so far as we in Great Britain are concerned, the social difficulty is aggravated by grave doubt and misgiving as to the existence and availableness of

adequate energies and infallible methods for achieving the redemption and reconstruction of society. We are convinced; we are ready, we are even eager for the attack, but we do not know exactly what to do, where to begin, and how best to proceed. We wish to be swift, but before all things we must be sure. We desire to be kind, but truth is our first obligation. We want to help the needy, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and save the criminal, but without damaging the manhood of the man. We sigh for the new heavens and the new earth of the city of God. Shew us the way and we will walk therein. Certainty; give us certainty. Doubt paralyses invention, cripples effort, saps enthusiasm, generates despair. We halt and listen for the voice behind us saying, "This is the way," but a multitude of divisive and anarchical counsellors assail our ears, and we hurry from the scene, sad and beseeching. It is expecting too much say some. Others declare it will be effected without us, in the twinkling of an eye, by the all-sufficient action of the Omnipotent; God Himself will descend from the heavens with a shout, and a regenerated world will instantly greet His appearing. The social engineers construct bridge after bridge across the swirling waters that flood the vast distances between us and the fair city of God; but alas! the winds blow and smite them in their strength, and they go down, destroying many a precious life. We want a bridge that will resist the gales in their wildest fury, and sustain the heaviest burdens that may be put upon it. Where is he who is worthy for these things? For myself I know but *One*, the same Lord Jesus who has descended from heaven, and was welcomed with the song, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased." He, and He alone has the words of eternal life. Social redemption is in Him. Power, method, impulse, dwell there in God-like fulness. At this late day in the world's life, and in the full radiance of the experience of centuries, it still abides true, "in none other is there salvation"; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, whereby society must be saved. I go straight to Him.

Then our critical question, that on which all turns, is: Is it

possible to vindicate and apply in detail such a faith and procedure as this, without stepping an inch off the solid ground of historical fact and eternal principle?

Let us see—

(1.) And first we must admit that poets, economists, theologians, and politicians, agree that the *real wealth of a city is its citizens*, its men, and women, and children; not its money, buildings, books, science or religion, but its persons. Here, as always, persons are supreme. Personality is the nerve of the world's life, the engine of the world's movement, the lever of the world's history. True riches are in souls, not in things. Not Scripture ~~f~~merely, but experience and philosophy declare that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Man is greater than any and all his products. Lose sight of that capital fact, and your political economy is, as Carlyle said, "a dismal science," your politics a paltry and irritating scramble for place, trade a fevered hunt for coins, and socialism itself disorder and death. Ask Greece in the zenith of its glory, Rome in its decline and fall, Holland in its battles for freedom, France in its revolutions, and England in its distinguished eras of "expansion"; and with one voice they proclaim: "The citizens make the city." Take them out, and there is little or no good left. Let them be selfish and corrupt, and the city will be as Sodom, and its fate as Gomorrah. Let them be pure in heart, noble in aim, sweet in disposition, and loving in life, and their dwelling place

"Shall look forth as the morning,
Fair as the moon,
Clear as the sun,
Terrible as an army with banners."

(2.) Next, it is provable that the ideal citizen is Christ Jesus, the Christ of the four Gospels, and of the Acts and Epistles; the Christ of the "Great Forty Years." Lessing, like many others, felt himself compelled to distinguish between the Christian religion and the religion of Christ. That distinction is real, and in reasoning often necessary. The normal standard of Christianity is not a disciple, be he as consecrated and capable as Paul, or as

loving and holy as John ; not a church of the fourth or nineteenth century ; but the Founder of Christianity Himself, His spirit, acts, words, and achievements. We must take our impression direct from Him, and that first society in which He lives and moves and has His being.

Renan has described the steps by which the " Church became all in Christianity " ; and so displaced much of Christianity ; and then he speaks of the one step more by which " a bishop becomes all in the Church," and thus gets rid of much of the Christianity that remained. We do not recognise that bishop. We are not of that Church, and refuse to take our social and economic ideals from either him or it. To the Founder and Master Himself we go : " If men speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them."

(3.) Now, there is no denying that the ministry of Jesus exhibits a breadth and depth of social sympathy absolutely unique ; a fulness of healing energy for the manifold diseases of the individual and collective life of man positively unparalleled.

He lived a bright, sunny, large and free life ; devoid of harshness and asceticism, rich in courage, frankness, faith, hope and love ; never afraid of life's perils and temptations, or averse to its simple joys and natural pleasures. He saw the enriching of the individual by multiplicity of relationships ; the expansion of the family by its sacred companionships and large interests ; and the discipline and culture of the worker by generous service for his fellows. " He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." " He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil " ; reconstructing broken and shattered lives, restoring lost faith and hope, lifting the burdens off weak and footsore pilgrims, and soothing with His divine consolations the hearts of the sad. Misery gravitates to Him as flowers to the sun. The pariahs of society, the " roughs " and " fallen women " come out of their hiding places whenever He draws near. Himself despised and rejected of men, cast out by the leaders of " Society," " Theology," " Ritual," and " State," He is the

natural friend of social outcasts, the poor, maimed, halt and blind. They gather about Him, as men numb with cold about a glowing fire. He is Himself the good Samaritan He paints, and takes the colours in His picture from His own soul. He is the "layman" with the big heart, who pours "oil and wine" into the gaping wounds of the victims of tyrannical strength; whilst the man "in orders," the cultured ecclesiastic of the Metropolis, gathers up his robes, grips his prayer-book, and hurries breathless to his ritual, his pigmy soul all unstirred by the miseries and woes of the squalid and vulgar traveller, prostrate and bleeding on the road. "Miseries and woes indeed!" He questions their existence, save in the speech of agitators, and the fancy of lazy "ne'er-do-wells." Had not the men who "devoured widow's houses, and for a pretence made long prayers," reported that, "on the whole," Jewish society was in a far more healthy state than in the days of the Maccabees, crimes fewer, poverty more scarce, and work more abundant? To be sure, taxation was still heavy, and ruinously uncertain, owing to the hated Roman influence; but "on the whole," things were very comfortable, and the poor ought to be content, and the riotous strongly held in check. And I sometimes think that if some of us optimists in easy circumstances were compelled to exchange places for a brief space with those to whom we preach the gospel of content and silence, we should discover that the "details" and "exceptions" to the condition, "on the whole" so satisfactory, were galling and grievous enough. Confessedly, our social trouble, that which tests our insight, patience, and aims, converges on the lot of the criminal and vicious, the worthless and the thriftless, the incapable and weak. Here the ideal citizen will find the heaviest strain on his resources, and here it is exactly that the Son of Man reveals the matchless qualities of His saving ministry. Men find in Society what they seek. Strong men create their own environments. As steel draws steel so they attract the problems they seek to solve. Jesus is love of man, of man lost, lost to God, to himself and to his fellows; love of his welfare, which is righteousness; and

therefore His subtle, speaking sympathies bring to Him not the correct, cultured, and contented denizens of the palace and the mansion, but draw the forgotten and famishing souls of the slums of Jerusalem into the light, and give them to feast on the Bread of Life, as the heart of the mother draws and provides for her child. If you saw Him you could tell the poor and needy were not far off with more certainty than you could predict the arrival of the ship from the sight of the sail. The programme of the ancient servant of Jehovah was endorsed by the Preacher in the Nazareth Synagogue, and proved in deed and truth all over Palestine :—

“ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor :
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

It is not surprising, therefore, that men who speak bitterly of the caste and coldness, selfishness and sin of Christian Society, should be eager, as I have frequently noticed they are, to except that Divine Teacher who has ploughed His name into history as the Best Friend of all the poor, and the all-sufficient Saviour of all the lost.

(4.) But, for a moment, we must go deeper. “ Life,” says Browning,

“ With all it yields of joy and woe,
And hope and fear, . . .
Is just our chance o’ the prize of learning love,
How love might be, hath been indeed, and is.”*

And yet it is the prize we win last, and use least perfectly when won. *It is in heart forces society fails.* Nothing so completely exposes our native poverty. We love the lovely; that is easy and delightful. We can scarcely help it. “ Do not even the publicans the same?” But to love the loveless and godless, perverse and foolish, the waifs and wastrels of society, the “ vulgar

* “ Death in the Desert.” Browning’s Works, Vol. VII.

herd," the "ignorant rabble," the covetous and lazy poor, the selfish and injurious rich, the frenzied and mischievous agitators, heedless, self-conceited prattlers, who blight our character, take the bread out of our mouths, and what is worse, out of the mouths of our children; to love these and their like, to take pains to win them to better ways, to suffer cheerfully for them;—ah! who is sufficient for these things? Where shall we go to acquire the prize of learning to love such as these? Where, but to Him who commends His own love to us in that whilst we are yet sinners He dies for us; to Him, who not only weeps over passion-blinded and doomed Jerusalem, but offers Himself in sacrifice for the redemption of its citizens; to Him who expressly and of purpose seeks and saves the lost! It is there, at the Cross of Jesus, shines "the light that never was on sea or shore," but beams straight and full on men, transfiguring the meanest soul that breathes, adding invisible and immeasurable values to the spirit of the poorest and wickedest, opening illimitable vistas of saintship and service for those who *were* "fornicators, idolators, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with men, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners; but now they have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God." It is there, at the Cross, we feel the unspeakable pathos that throbs in the plaintive appeal, "Destroy not Him with thy meat" (that is with thy self-indulgence), "for whom Christ died." It is there, at the Cross, we see the sources of the fine passion that exclaims, "Wherefore if meat maketh my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore"; and the heroic self suppression, that dares to invite the heaviest of all penalties for the sake of saving others, if thereby the end could be reached, as it protests, "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake." It is there, at the Cross, for the first time in history, men feel the love that constrains them to sell land and houses to meet the needs of the poor belonging to the new brotherhood, and are fired to live, not to themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again. Therefore we are not ashamed

of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto social salvation. God is in Christ living and suffering for men, making an end of sin, and of all its obstacles to penitence and trust and hope and ministry, and so "reconciling the world to Himself." In all the social crises of life as well as for individual salvation, "we preach Christ, and Christ crucified"; the chief working-force in human redemption, the creative energy of that love that saves at once the soul and the world.

(5.) But for us, to whom the Cross of the Lord Jesus is the centre of Christianity, this is not all. The relation of Christ to Society is special; and is only fully interpreted by His Incarnation. His appearing is not an accident in the long and chequered history of Israel, nor is his sacrifice a detached event broken off from the rest of the life of man. He came in the fulness of time at the pre-ordained moment, and discharged a work for which the world as well as Himself had been prepared. The Incarnation is "God in history," the central, universal and indestructible life of Society. This confused and perplexed world is not undivine. God is in it for evermore, fills it at every moment, makes it, is the life of all its movement, the ejection of its evil, the correction of its faults, its salvation and its goal. Christ is **THE SON OF MAN**. That is the name He elects to be known by. He prefers it, though we do not. He uses it so frequently and with such variety of setting as ought to make it irremovable. His relations are with the race, not only with the elect descendants of Abraham; with Humanity in its spiritual unity, undivided wholeness, and unending progress; not only with an ephemeral and restricted nationality. The city is of God, and for God, and in God. "There is no temple for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb;"—God in His limitless power and redeeming energy;—is the temple thereof." Society is not a chaos but an order, a unity, a progress. Carlyle, in his first talk with Emerson, said, with the clear wisdom that so often shone in his utterances, "Christ died on the tree; that built Dunscore Kirk yonder; that brought you and me together. Time has only a relative existence." The ages are one. The human world has but one centre. He who dies

on the tree is at once Son of Man and SON OF GOD. "The Eternal Life" was manifested *here*, on our planet, in our life, seen, felt and experienced in the soul of society, hushing its discords, evoking its harmonies, directing its forces and inspiring its work. It is not a merely human citizen showing us the way we should take; it is God Himself in civic and social conditions, incarnating Himself that He may be the Saviour of the world as of the individual; the second Adam, head of the new humanity, at once the creator and pattern of the new citizen race, and the builder of the New City of God.

Rejoice, then, and be exceeding glad, O ye sons of men! Your "citizenship is in heaven"; your relationships are with a spiritual order, whose basis is laid in the sacrifice of Christ, whose strength and perpetuity are secured by His Incarnation, and whose energy and beauty stand revealed in His brief but matchless ministry. "Cry aloud and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

VII.

And now I think we may go a step further in search of the coveted certitude, keeping our feet on the solid ground of fact, but digging down through the subsoil of historical circumstance to the granite of principle, the base-rock of eternal truths.

(1) Everybody allows that man's actions are the veritable clothing spun out of his thoughts and faiths, desires and convictions; so the institutions, laws, and agencies of human commonwealths are the visible garments of the principles and ideas held and cherished in common by the mass of the people. *Societies are compacted together by their beliefs and energies, ideas and convictions*; not by the imagined "Social Contract" of Rousseau, not by mere blood affinities, as most imagine, not by the heritage of great achievements and heroic deeds, as Renan teaches; but by the ideals the people most profoundly cherish, the vital principles that lie at the root of their deepest thought, the beliefs that sway their minds concerning God and the government of the world; concerning

man as man; concerning men, women, and children; and the relations they hold to one another; their dependence and independence, responsibility and freedom, righteousness and love. Bad beliefs make bad men and bad peoples. Low ideals lead to meanness and treachery, cruelty and falseness, to trickery and deceit in trade; hypocrisy in worship, and selfishness in life. Ideas—those which make ideals—are, according to Lotze, the chief impelling forces of history, entering into the very tissue of the social organism, shaping the general course of events, creating institutions, originating laws, controlling administration, and affecting industry, and thus controlling the building processes of every social edifice.*

Look for a moment at a page or two of "The Story of the Nations." According to Herodotus, the Egyptians, the first people of the earth having a history, were so opulent in deities that it was more easy to find a god than a man. To them the tomb was more than the temple, and the world of the dead more creative of awe and worship than the world of the living; yet their ideas of the gods, of dead ancestors, and of the sacredness of some animals had in them such vitality that they created a civilisation of singular wealth, kept their place as a people nearly four thousand years, and gave an impact in directions, often forgotten, to the progress of the people of God.† Assyria begins auspiciously with the worship of "Asshur," or the "good God," and Babylonia is the cradle of many of the religious and scientific traditions of our civilisation; yet their idolatry of "might" leads to a despotism so absolute and untempered, crude and cruel, sensual and debauched, that it stops progress, and breeds decay. China worships the past, and becomes the symbol of stolidity and stationariness. India, "the home of Pantheism and fatalism," creates a cast-iron "clericalism," builds up a system of "caste," and slays hope at the birth, and makes

* "Philosophy of History," Flint, p. 583.

† The date assigned by Lepsius (3892 B.C.) is generally accepted as the beginning of the Egyptian Empire, and though it saw many changes, it was not incorporated in the Roman Empire till the battle of Actium, 30 B.C.

social advance impossible. The Hebrew is distinctively, though with much struggle, a believer in the Eternal, in righteousness and salvation, in the filiation of all the peoples of the world, in a common and hopeful destiny for mankind, and takes primary rank as a potent witness for God and apostolic missionary to the Gentiles.* In Greece, art ideas, ethical wisdom, and love of physical beauty are dominant; and, though the glory of the people is too soon eclipsed, they become the teachers of imperial Rome, and their voice is still heard speaking with authority in the schools of the world. To that same Rome is granted the distinction of embodying with splendid fulness the idea of a nation, comprehensive in polity, and devoted to order; an outward compulsory political unity, possessed of, and inspired by a positive law; an order and a unity, the genius and astuteness of Hildebrand took as his guide in erecting the Papal edifice of the middle ages. To-day Germany, young and a little headstrong, speaks of faith in fatherland and unity, and lives and grows thereby; Anglo-Saxondom with all its faults and vices makes duty supreme, and receives its exceeding great reward; and France, "that most sensitive organ of the European body politic," shows signs in the judgment of a recent expositor, of the atrophy of the higher life, a decadence of literature, a disturbance of the social order, all due to the loss of its religious, and political, sexual and personal ideals.† Yea so far has this "disenchantment" proceeded that the observer sees little hope for the recovery of the French nation save as she opens her nature to the profounder truth concerning man's inward being, and his place in the scheme of things. So true is it that the vitality and progress of states are determined by their ideas and convictions concerning God and man.

(2) Now Christianity began its regeneration of the world by its fresh concept of God, and it completes and crowns it by its revelation of *man*. When Jesus said, "How much better is a man

* "The Philosophy of History," by Professor Flint, p. 11.

† See an instructive and powerful article by F. W. H. Myers, on the "Disenchantment of France," *Nineteenth Century*, vol. xxiii, p. 661.

than a sheep?" He sowed the seed of a harvest of revolutions. "How much better is a man"—*any* man; not Hillel, cultured, and assiduous in the maintenance of the law; not Gamaliel, broad minded and tolerant; not Nicodemus, eager in his quest for truth, and unprejudiced enough to sit at the feet of the Galilean innovator; not the high priest, exalted in office and clad with authority, but *any* man whatever, no matter how poor his lot, broken his heart, coarse his habits, blind his intellect, or gross his vices. At once Christ penetrates to the core of the question of man's nature, and lays bare the unspeakable possibilities of the human spirit as the offspring of the eternal Father, dowered with capacities for finest moral issues, susceptible of the keenest wretchedness and misery, and yet the heir of immortality, and the object of Infinite Love.

It is here Christianity wins. Science sends the weakest to the wall; Jesus spreads His shield over men of shattered hopes and nerveless will, speaks to them with pity and tenderness, and begins in them His everlasting redemption. Positivism, looking through the eyes of Mr. Cotter Morison on the gathering masses of waifs and strays, stands aghast at the truly awful sight; and, knowing no Divine Redeemer and Renewer, sighs for a deluge to rid the world of the presence of such hopeless putridity that the human race may have a clean start with some elect Positivist as its new Noah. Christianity shows two men meeting casually in Rome. One is a Phrygian slave, a fugitive who has sought a refuge in the slums of a great city—a slave in the first century of the Christian era. A more degrading position he could hardly find, except by adding, as, indeed, he has already done, the deeper ignominy of being a thief to the dark dishonour of his lost freedom. C. Pollio, the founder of the first public library in Rome, flung such slaves as gave him offence into his fishponds to fatten his lampreys. Even the inflexible Cato could turn out his old slaves to die by the river side without a word of sympathy or an act of kindly regard. Slaves were treated worse then than dogs are treated now. It was counted a dishonour even to speak to a slave. Onesimus is a slave and a thief too!

And yet when Paul, the son of a Pharisee, a born Jew, once possessed of all the supercilious pride of a Jew, royal in intellect and accomplished in the learning of his age—when this prisoner for Jesus Christ meets Onesimus he discovers for him a wondrous pity, pours into the poor slave's heart all his love, labours for his salvation with an earnestness that is more astonishing than any miracle, treats him as a dear friend, calls him his own son, and, as if that were not enough, begs his master, Philemon, to receive him as if he were Paul's other self. Rome, with all its glories, has never had in it a grander sight than the fellowship of those two men. City of paintings and sculpture, of architecture and thrilling history, thou hast never known a theme of richer interest than the toiling of that great and gifted nature for the salvation of that poor runaway thief!

No one but God who made man knows what there is locked up in him. Taine, speaking of the writers of the earlier centuries of our literature, says: "They knew man, but not men, they had not penetrated to the soul; they had not seen the infinite diversity and complexity of souls." But to-day we live in the full radiance of man's apocalypse. His values are the burden of our poetry, the goal of our legislation, the key to our philosophy of history, and the inspiration of our social enthusiasms. We are beginning to feel that it is a sin that will be visited with severest judgment by the enthroned judge of the nations, for the strongest man or nation to hurt, or even to neglect, one of the least of the brothers and sisters of the Saviour of the World.*

(3) The fundamental mistake of many of those who seek the reconstruction of society is that they do not take man as a *living whole*. He is parceled out amongst the competitors for him until it is difficult to find him; the metaphysicians appropriate his mind, the theologians his soul, the novelists his emotions, the doctors his bones and nerves, the economists his productive tools, society his clothes, and the positivists, after their master, Comte, reduce the individual to an abstraction, and treat humanity as the only real

* Cf. Matthew xxv. 31, 46.

being. The fact is, man is million-sided, and Christianity omits nothing from centre to circumference. One of the worst features of the schemes of State-Socialists is their beggarly account of man. The industrial system is not man ; man was here before it, and he will be here when it has gone. It is only one stage in the evolution of the human race, and if you provide for that only you will not have met the whole situation. Men become "quacks" without knowing it, and innocently proclaim a remedy for a specific disease as if it were a universal panacea. Medicines for local complaints are essential, but the spiritual is the ultimate root of all life ; and though you materialise man a thousand times, and think to satisfy him with science and culture, his defrauded soul will protest against your neglect and cry out for the living God. The key to all our social problems lies in the Christian conception of man. Old as the Gospel, and yet new as the morning, it contains immense reserves of unexhausted energy. It triumphed in Jerusalem and Rome, in Antioch and Philippi, and, taken in its wholeness of range and spirituality of meaning, it is able to conquer everywhere. For it exposes sin in its deep baseness and fearful issues ; it meets the disorder of sin completely by its message of Redemption, and it elevates the social order by inspiring a deeper reverence for man as man, and making the care of the outcast, the relief of the miserable, and the salvation of the lost the duty at once of the individual and the State.

(4) But our slowness in apprehending the fulness of the social Gospel of Christ is much more manifest when we investigate our working idea of *woman*. How far we are even yet from the Christian teaching concerning woman as a distinct human entity, free, spiritual, sovereign in choice, and responsible, is apparent in the double standard of morals we still adopt for men and women in the cowardly refusal to permit women to share in making the laws under which they live and suffer ; and, till lately, in blocking the doors to the very industries whose fruits they use. Surely these and other remnants of the Pagan subjection of women ought to give place to the more just and reasonable teaching of Christ. Specially is this requisite in the matter of

marriage. Marriage is the unit of the *social* state, the beginning of the home in which the new citizens are trained for obedience and service in the wider relations of the city and of the nation. On this Jesus spoke with distinctness and depth, forbidding what Moses had allowed, and asserting in effect that marriage is no loose alliance of man and woman, but the union of two equal souls in supreme affection for each other, and in common subjection to the authority of Christ; a union which has its picture and pattern in the self-sacrificing and persisting love He Himself showed on His Cross, and on no account to be snapped asunder because of temporary inconvenience, or fretted in twain because of the irksome, but educating, duties to which it may call us. Speaking of the crucial subject of divorce, the Lord of the new economy says, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery"; and He adds the deep and eternal principle in which His teaching roots itself—"Have ye not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female?" There, in the *nature* each had from the Father, with its special and complementary qualities and functions, resides the ineradicable right of the wife to the husband, and of the husband to the wife; not in the good order of society, not in compatibility of temper, but in the intrinsic qualities of the being the Eternal had granted to them. Perilous it is, then, in the extreme, for France to descend to a scheme of relationship between man and woman no higher than that between man and man; and for England, in a fit of puling weakness and greed of lawless pleasure, to attempt to overthrow the Divine basis of the primordial unit of the social state.*

* "The mighty lever which put into operation the religious and moral influences which have renewed the world lay in the most holy relation of mankind—in marriage. Christianity found concubinage recognised by law, the legitimate established form under which the two sexes lived together."—"Bunsen's Hippolytus," Vol. II., p. 223. "If, moreover, the relations between men and women are not kept, in a sense, *above* the relations between men and men, they will rapidly fall *below* them. We are led into a world of joyless vice from the sheer decay of the conception of virtue."—F. W. H. Myers, "Nineteenth Century," p. 661.

(5) Going further afield we recognise the dependence of man on man, the strange intertwining of lives, the subtle links of influence which unite rich and poor, healthy and sick, good and bad, the *solidarity of humanity* as one of the irremovable facts of social existence. The universe is built up from base, through superstructure to crown, on the principle of interdependence. No one thing, no one fact, no one being—God excepted—stands alone, sustaining and nourishing itself. This vast earth owes its place, its movement, and its bright, beaming, boundless life to the greater sun; and the sun himself would perish, and his vast fires expire, if not frequently fed. From the tiniest insect that crawls on the leaf of a geranium to the brightest of the stars the law of interdependence obtains, without check or exception. No thing, no plant, no tree, no child, no man—not the most selfish, self-centred, and self-moved—liveth of and by itself or himself. “We are members one of another.” “Solidarity” of interest is said to be “the scientific conception of life”; it certainly is the poetic, and as surely is it the Christian.*

(6) But this wide sweep of subtle and strong relationships must not be permitted to obliterate, or overwhelm, or fetter, the *freedom of the individual*. Christ never loses sight of the supreme worth of the personal man, and of the absolute requirement of freedom to his well-being. His salvation, expansion, and perfection is part of the ground-plan of the world. Each one is to be a person with full powers, opportunities, and responsibilities; going into Society, not to lose himself, but to find his real self, or, as Goethe says, “to form his character in the tumult of the world.” The integrity of the man is sacred, and every other man must respect it. The strong must not be permitted to suppress the weak in the wild wantonness of his power, but in justice to the rights of souls must bear their infirmities. No one in authority may violently interfere with another, though his inferior, not even to make him strong; nor use force to make him wise and good. Every one who encroaches on the rights of the individual

* Romans v. 12, 21. 1 Corinthians xv. 22.

conscience is to be stoutly resisted; and the richest in gifts, strongest in zeal, must imitate the wisdom of him who said to the Corinthians—"Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy, for by faith ye stand." *

(7) We are now within sight of those cardinal principles of justice, trusteeship, and love, which determine to so unspeakable a degree the relations of men to each other, and constitute the three supreme virtues and graces of the social order. "*Justice* is the crying want of the world"; the bread for which the people are ever hungering; the keynote without which all else is out of tune; the soul of health, without which no state is abidingly strong and progressive.

Dr. Johnson said: "I have found men more kind than I expected, and less just." That was not strange. It is easier to be charitable than to be just; to build a cathedral with the profits of a gin distillery than to give up a trade disastrous to society, but gainful to the tradesman; to bestow a donation on a hospital than pay a fair wage to a toiler; to win fame as a patriot by pouring vitriolic contempt on a scheme than to dispassionately examine it; and to malign an uncomfortable opponent than to prove him in the wrong.

But "the firm foundation of God standeth—having this seal, "The Lord knoweth them that are His; and let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." Let him stand aloof from injustice. And not only aloof, but let him expose the injustices so numberless that if we saw them all at once we should be overwhelmed by the sight. For what is bad housing of the poor but an essential wrong—a robbery? What is the "social evil" but an intrinsic injustice done by base, mean, creatures to the wreckage of womanhood? What is poverty? Not all injustice to others—much of it is due to laziness, more to "drink"; but some of it to the violation of that great law of labour, uttered by the artizan Paul, "Masters, render unto your

* Cf. J. B. Crozier, "Civilisation and Progress," p. 140; Phillips Brooks. "The Influence of Jesus," p. 98.

servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven."

The sin of the Church has been that it has too often cared more to distribute "charity" than to win justice, and yet He who is our King said—"seek first the rule of God, and His *righteousness*." Charity is good, and still needed. Christ created it, and still sustains it; but far to be preferred is the justice which quenches the need for it, and gives every man a chance to earn what he needs, and holds nothing from him that he has earned. The vase in which the acorn is planted will be shattered by the growing oak; you need not smite it: were we to sow the seeds of justice, many of the honoured and ancient institutions and legal regulations that hold the tyrannies and wrongs of the world, would be shattered and soon disappear.

(8) Not less important is the recognition of trusteeship as a principle of the administration of God, and indispensable to the stability and happiness of the social realm. Abraham is chosen trustee of great truths for Israel and the world. God elects persons and nations to enjoy privileges, receive teaching and discharge important tasks for mankind. "The perfection of man," says Emerson, "is a love of use." Divinity is seen in service; service of the lowliest. "He that would be greatest among you let him be your servant." The highest we can *be* is reached when we *do* our utmost for those in sorest need. "He that will save his life shall lose it." We cannot do our individual work as we ought without larger aims. Life is keyless to the selfish. Unless we hold all we are and have as stewards of God, for the service of man, our culture will be a veneered and polished egotism, our business a chase for money, our politics a wrangle for place, and our Christianity a perpetual self-rebuke. We share the gifts of God on the condition of fullest use for others, and we help in the best life of the ages, in the measure in which we fulfil that condition.

(9.) Napoleon said, "There are but two forces that rule the world—Love and the Sword." In Browning's "Easter Day" the final decision, after canvassing all the possible choices of the soul, is expressed in the words—

"I let the world go, and take love !
 Love survives in me, albeit those
 I love be henceforth masks and shows,
 Not living men and women : still
 I mind how love repaired all ill,
 Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth amends
 With, parents, brothers, children, friends !
 And I will match
 Departed love with love, attach
 Old memories to new dreams, nor scorn
 The poorest of the grains of corn
 I save from shipwreck on this isle,
 Trusting its barrenness may smile
 With happy foodful green one day,
 More precious for the pains. I pray,—
 Leave to love, only ! "

Love God with all the heart, and soul, and strength, and love man — thy neighbour—as thyself. On that hangs all the law and the prophets ; all the order and the progress of the world. It is more than worship. If, at the altar, gift in hand, you remember you have *hurt* a brother-soul, rise at once, leave the offering, go and be reconciled to him ; for the harmony of souls takes precedence of altar gifts, and the music of the union of sundered hearts is sweeter than cathedral psalmody. Love is light on life. Raise the heat of fluor spar to a temperature still under redness, and it will emit the beautiful light we call fluorescence. The heat unlocks the molecules so as to enable them to exert their long latent power of vibration ; so the heat of love to God and man will raise the forces of the spirit till they emit a light on the dark problems of human misery, and enable us to see hidden needs, unsuspected responsibilities, and undreamt privileges. Love is life, and the life of love is a life of glad service. However inspired, it speaks in the language of self-sacrifice, and is heard not only in the Christian Scriptures, but in the sacred vow of Gautama—" Never will I seek or receive private salvation ; never enter final peace alone ; but for ever and everywhere will I live and strive for the universal redemption of every creature."

On such principles, principles so common, simple, and few, yet so harmonious, symmetrical, and complete, the perfect social order,

the New City of God, is now being built; and has been since the day they were first of all manifest in the Christ, and in the communities which sprang from His loins. In Him and in them we see this royally free, self-suppressing, world-saving love; the enthusiastic use of all powers and opportunities for the salvation of men as of God given trusts; an inflexible obedience to the eternal laws of right; deep reverence for the independence and freedom of the human soul; a noble scorn for the accidents of birth and fortune in themselves and apart from character; a chivalrous defence of woman, and a glad recognition of her true place; solicitude for the welfare of children; an irrepressible eagerness to enrich the world with the fulness of the blessing of the salvation of God: these are the formative ideals of the apostolic age, the productive principles of the primitive Christian faith; entitling it to rank first and chief of all gospels for the reconstruction of society.

Are you surprised that the common people—the men who breathe the atmosphere of despal and rejection—heard them with delight, and hungered for them as for the bread of everlasting life? Not a line that was anti-social was in them. From first to last they contemplated man's good in all the departments of his activity and experience from circumference to centre. They were fire to melt the fetters of the slave; force to lift the burdens of the oppressed; power to raise men out of the mire of misery and sin; hope for the desolate and weary; deliverance for the imprisoned; new life for the dead. They needed no theoretical proofs. Sunshine does not ask for syllogisms; men heard and accepted as the hungry do bread and the thirsty water; they found—what they could get nowhere else—the merciful Father, the redeeming Christ, the renewing Spirit, and the brotherhood of souls. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, was coming down out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband, and men went out with joyous welcomes and large hopes.

VIII.

“All things have two handles, beware of the wrong one,” is sound advice; but the handles are rarely labelled; often they are

alike as the bows of a pair of scissors, and yet if we get hold of the wrong one we have to pay for it. In science the wrong METHOD means false conclusions and bungling work; in theology misrepresentation of God and hurt of men, confusion of thought and bitterness of feeling; in social enterprise, at least, it is delay, injustice, controversy, strife, retrogression and death.

(1) Clearly that is the best road which leads to the goal without hurt or loss to the pilgrims as they journey, and without risk to the object for which they travel. Bacon's scientific method was fruitful, and has proved itself the best because it conducted to a true interpretation and use of nature, and the law of her manifold ministry—so that is the best social “organon” which

- (a) does the utmost justice to the principles on which society should be built, and is being built;
- (b) perfectly utilises all the organs and instruments that offer real aid to any citizen of whatever type and condition in attaining the ideal of citizenship and fulfilling his citizen duties; and
- (c) opens the truest sources of inspiration to, and offers the most effective helps in, translating the moral and spiritual elements of the ideal citizen into character and life.

That is the worst method which fails to show the social sides of the mind of Christ, debases His religion to a “private consolation” or a personal advantage, obscures his conceptions of God and of man, and of the relations of man to man, and freezes devotion to “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, and whatsoever things are of good report.”

(2) Such a test as this compels the rejection of every method of social action which does not place the forces of *personal sympathy*, and heart to heart, life to life ministry in the front rank. The action of soul on soul is the initial and all-controlling law of the Kingdom of God, the Alpha and Omega of social progress. We are concerned with persons and

" It takes a soul

To move a body : it takes a high-souled man
 To move the masses . . . even to a cleaner sty.
 It takes the ideal to blow an inch aside
 The dust of the actual : and your Fouriers failed,
 Because not poets enough to understand
 That life develops from within."*

We stand too far off to do our work well. It is this hateful aloofness of feeling and interest that blights our endeavour and makes the moral harvest an impossibility. We send. Jesus said "Go." We send a dead coin. Jesus gave *Himself*. We talk. Jesus said, "Go, work." Oh! how impatient men are of this unending talk, this ever-rolling "ocean of debate." How they hunger for some real hard work! Some one difficulty grappled with and mastered, another evil abolished for ever, a righteous statute passed by Parliament! Would that we could cease talk altogether of theories, and create "cases" that apply principles and demonstrate truths. "Deeds, not words," should be our motto. Salt never speaks, it preserves. Leaven is quiet, but it assimilates. Electricity is invisible, but it carries its message to the ends of the earth. The salt penetrates, is actually there, where it does its work. The little leaven plant, four thousand to the square inch, placed in an appropriate temperature, and in contact with favourable materials, multiplies itself with wonderful rapidity—an express engine will stop as soon as its energy. "Jesus laid His hand on the leper and *touched* him," that touch of sinless purity, the symbol of His cordial sympathy, and the vehicle of His cleansing power. We do not touch, if we can help it; we stand with our scented robes gathered about us, and refuse to carry our benedictions to the people of the alleys and slums, soothing our consciences with a poorly paid delegation. It will not do. The chemist must not only know his Baconian method, he must use it in his laboratory. The physician must see his patient; and we, too, must seek the lost man, get at him and get hold of him, stick to him,

* "Aurora Leigh." E. B. Browning.

and twine ourselves about him ; watch for him as the angler does for fish, or the mother for her returning child. Personal effort is the supreme need. For "when all is said of scientific progress," asks one of our daily papers, "what has really lifted Europe above the rest of the world but lives of faith, and self-conquest and continuous aspiration? "*.

(3) A further use of the same test authorises a selection of social methods of service primarily on the principle of their effect on the *characters* of men rather than according to their influence in immediately and abruptly changing their *conditions*.

True it is, and we are not learning it a moment too soon, the material conditions in which men live are a controlling factor in their moral progress. Though "morality" is not in "things" but in men, yet things go far to limit the judgment of men as to what morality is, and a change of social environment is not infrequently attended with a quickening of the conscience and an enlargement and elevation of the personal ideal. There is a moral element in good housing, sanitary inspection and regulation, airy and well-ventilated workrooms, cottage gardens, "open spaces," free libraries, abundant illumination, and careful and properly controlled police. But the best soil will not clothe thorns with grapes, nor the holiest atmosphere make the bad heart good. It is the verdict of history that character goes farther to determine condition than condition to make character. The victory of real men over abject and stifling poverty, consummate ignominy, profound desolation, prison hardships, and social crucifixion, is the glory of the human past and the bright prophecy of its triumphant future. Progress has been wrung out of the hardest conditions, and character cleansed and burnished to brightness in the sevenfold-heated furnaces of persecution. Equalise conditions more and more and by all means, but never lose sight of the effect of your equalising process on the manliness of the man. The object of all real charity, and of all justice, says Francis Peek, is "to prevent the

* *Pull Mall Gazette*, August 15.

demoralisation of mendicancy, and compel the idle to become industrious, and assist them to obtain work; to make the improvident become provident by the knowledge that if they lavish their earnings upon self-indulgence, when hard times come there will be no indiscriminate relief to fall back upon.”*

So we must test all schemes for the “communisation of the means of production,” not simply by their contribution to human enjoyment, but on the mental and moral expansion of the individual and the growth of society. Methods of production and distribution, schemes of legislation and relief that threaten a breach in the citadel of character, or delay the building up of men in thrift, industry, intelligence, and usefulness, must be rejected by all who desire to rear the edifice of society on indestructible foundations.

(4) But *we must take care not to reject any mode of action which offers any real aid*, so long as character is not weakened and personal service not discouraged. Men speak of the method of Christ as though it were exclusively *inward*, and had nothing to do with the outward. It is a mistake. Because Christ told two covetous and quarrelling brothers He had not been sent to relieve them of the responsibility of personal decision and choice in a difficulty which sprang out of their avarice, men had thought He disclaimed all interest in man’s outward life. Surely that is an unwarrantable conclusion. As to bulk He did more in His ministry for the outward welfare of men than the inward—met the physical needs of men with His beneficence, gave healing to their bodies, freed them from maladies of the mind, and discharged the duties of a social missionary. In fact, one cannot dissent from the inference of Rothe, when referring to organised and priest-led ecclesiasticisms, he says, “I do not for a moment doubt that the Lord Jesus Christ has far deeper interest nowadays in the development of our political condition than in our so-called Church movements and questions of the day. He knows well which has the more important issues behind it.”

* “Social Wreckage,” p. 198.

(5) No opportunity should be lost of quickening the *public conscience*, and developing a keen sense of responsibility for the wrongs that are being perpetuated in our midst. "Evil is wrought for want of thought." Men are apathetic because they are ignorant. They do wrong because they will not take pains to do right; blame "sweaters," and spend their money so as to support their trade; denounce papers that nourish the gambling vice of the country, and send them the advertisements by which they live; lament the bad work of the factories and buy cheap clothing, without any solicitude as to how it was made and paid for. We ought to secure additional force to the conscience by the exercise of the function of moral indignation. The public mind is dosed with immoral opiates, and an occasional explosion of moral dynamite is necessary to rouse it. Exposure of wrong is a duty. To stop the circulation of foul literature, prevent the huddling of the poor in unhealthy rooms, to punish the traffickers in harlotry at home and abroad, to abolish the dealers in strong drink, and to create an atmosphere that shall be death to the evils of the land, is one of the methods of nourishing the best life of the State demanding sustained and strenuous attention. Silence is wrong, wrong to the present generation and wrong to the unborn race. The atrophy of indignation is moral death.

(6) The *vigilant defence* of the oppressed, the protection of the weak and imperilled, of the young and defrauded; the enlightenment of the ignorant, the elevation of the debased in thought and enjoyment, are tasks essential to the advance of the City of God. Help to better ideals and loftier aims and purer ambitions should be freely ministered. The abolition of the idolatry of military leaders, and the extinction of the love of war, need to be accomplished so that misguided nations may stand together in the interests of peace. By simplicity of living we must displace the weak and blind ambition for accumulation; and multiply enjoyment by increasing the desire to do good. Impurity of thought and speech is to be expelled by a strong and passionate love of chastity, and a knightly devotion to the protection of the tempted and feeble; and so the code of public belief revised till it squares with the teaching of Christ.

(7) The difficult problem of *poverty* is to be solved and poverty abolished by the moral quickening and improvement of the citizen—for indolence is anti-social and anti-Christian—but also by restricting the area and extinguishing the evils of competition; aiding co-operation in all legitimate trade and by a wider adoption of the system of profit-sharing which has thrived in France under the direction of MM. Leclaire, Godin, Bord, and Madame Bouciaut, and in different parts of our country and the States.*

This carries us to the conclusion that we ought to employ all the available organs for advancing the kingdom of heaven. The Christian Church is the first, but not the only divine instrument for establishing the rule of God, here and now. Science with its revelations for the intellect, Art with its appeals to the imagination, Literature in its wealth for both, and the State as the organ of the will of the common people are open to our use in this exalted service.

Laisser-faire is practically dead. We have become state-socialists without knowing it. The post office and telegraph, the factory and mining laws, the education of the young, care of the incapable, oversight of industrial corporations, are samples of legislation which may be usefully extended in the direction of the "unearned increment of rent," the vesting of "common lands" in county councils, the prohibition of the use of insanitary property, the establishment of "home colonies" for the poor, and the development of the co-operation of the people in so far as it can be done without risk of injury to character, and the creation of jobbery.

Stedfastly following our guiding principles, let us dismiss coldness and indifference, and face life with courage, using experiment freely, preferring service to mere debate, assured that light will shine on our path as we are obedient to Him who is the Infallible Guide and Redeemer of men.

* Cf. Mill's "Political Economy," vol. ii., book iv., chapter vii.; "Profit Sharing," by Sedley Taylor, page 9; "Christianised Commerce, Consecrated Wealth," by William Walker.

IX.

But where are the *men*? Yes, where are the men for this work? Here, in my judgment, is the supreme task. This is the summit the social climbers have to reach. "It is not money I want," said Miss Octavia Hill, of some philanthropic work she had in hand; "it is men and women of good sense and good feeling." Greece rose to greatness through her illustrious sons. The glory of Zion is in saved souls. God's test of the greatness of nations is its new-born men. "The Lord shall count when He writeth up the evils, 'this one was born there.'"

For us this ought to be undeniable—"Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures," the seed of all the coming harvests of manhood; typical, creative, reproductive men. The Christian society is the first source of men whose souls are alight with social ideas, aflame with social ardours, astir to seize every opportunity of social usefulness; possessed of a social gospel, and commanded to go and preach it to every creature. The true Church is a drilled company of crusaders—a brotherhood in which every man has a weapon and a will to strike against the enemies of the human race—ignorance, drunkenness, debauchery, gambling, pestilence, and unbelief.

Its worship should be warm with welcomes for those who need them most, for the heart-sore and defeated, for the men of baffled will and broken-winged aspiration. Here, at least, it should be palpable that there is a gospel of personal sympathy with the poor, new hope for the despairing, and of strength for the weak. Never may we invite distrust of our Master by our churlishness and indifference. A down-hearted and penniless man found his way into a richly furnished and beautiful sanctuary. No greeting dismissed his hesitancy and fear. Down the aisle he wandered, looking for a resting-place; but no eye spoke a welcome, no voice whispered sympathy. He turned, and went out a sadder man than he came, saying, as he passed, to the sexton, "What church

is this?" "This is Christ's Church," was the answer. "Then I reckon," the neglected stranger replied, "the Master isn't in to-day." And He certainly was not. Be assured, if He is with us, the spirit which *seeks* to save the lost will be there. His self-denials will be the beauty of our sanctuary, and His grace-filled words the glory of His House. Let us arise and wipe away the reproach that comes of treating "pews" as personal property, and not as trusts to be used for God and men, like all other things. The want of a friendly fellowship and a true devotion to the service of man, not only causes the alienation of the poorest of the poor, but irritates our frank and ingenuous youth, and sends them in search of a robuster manhood and a quicker sympathy, to circles where they know they will not find stimulus to devotion and help in the search for and enjoyment of God.

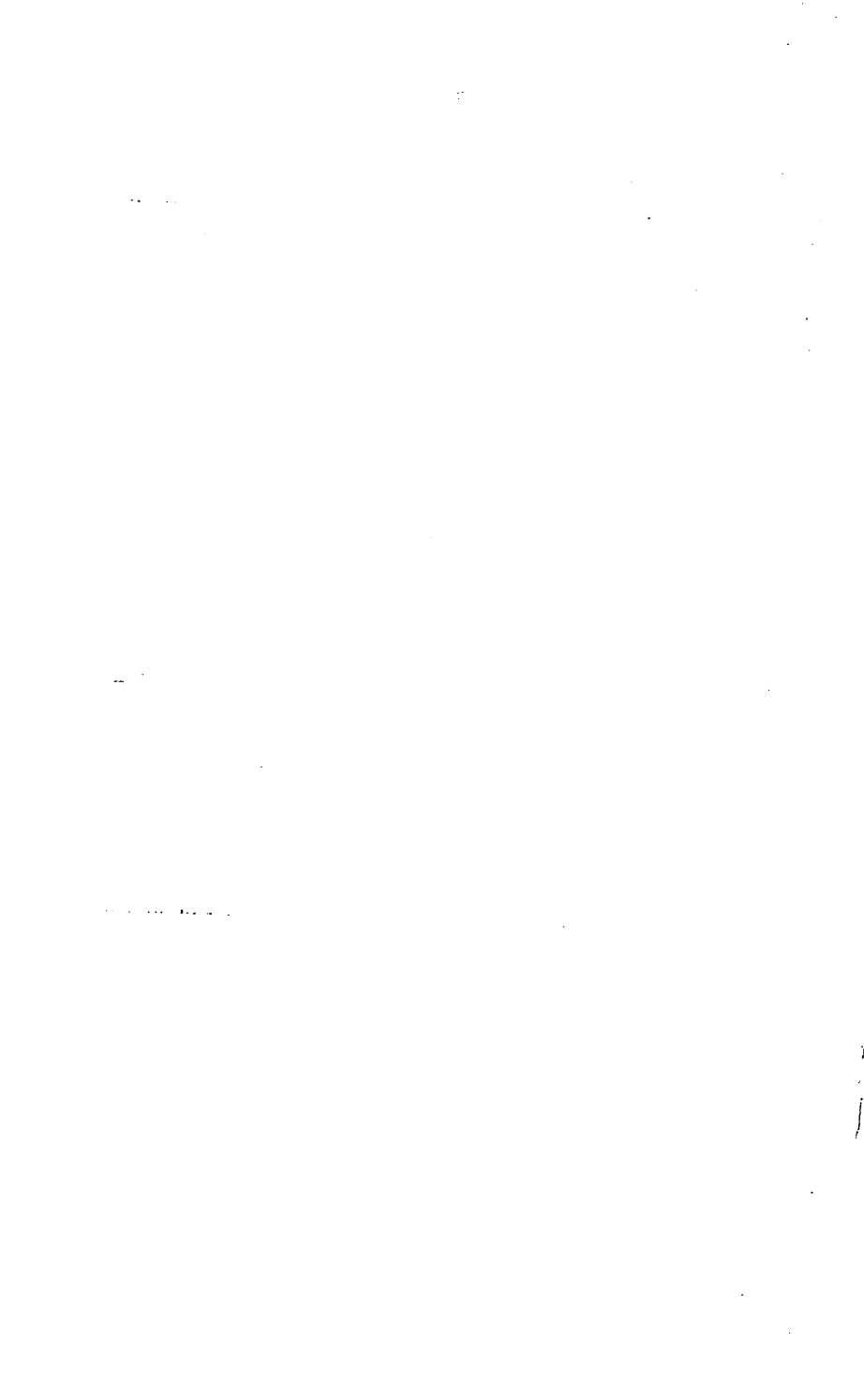
Of all men we ought to make the whole life of man our own, and refuse to be shut out of the civic, political, and social activities of the day. Our history is political. We have been, and still are the foes of all injustice. Our fathers were amongst the first in the ranks of Englishmen to fight for "soul freedom." Thomas Helwys in London sounded the apostolic note, and Roger Williams caught it and repeated it as he founded the state of Rhode Island, and took his place as the first legislator who provided for full and absolute liberty of conscience. John Bunyan said, "If I were out of prison to-day, I would preach the Gospel again to-morrow by the help of God," and on one occasion he engaged to do all that he could to send a just and true man into Parliament. At twenty-seven years of age Robert Hall sent forth his caustic essay proving that "Christianity is consistent with the love of freedom," defended the right of "public discussion," chivalrously pleaded the cause of the overburdened poor, expounded the "advantages of knowledge to the lower classes," and shouted for joy when the French Revolution proclaimed that the "empire of despotism and darkness had been smitten with a stroke which sounded throughout the universe." John Foster wrote for the amelioration of the Africans. William Knibb pleaded for and won the emancipation of the slaves. Joseph Livesey started the

Total Abstinence Reform, and Jabez Tunnicliffe created the Band of Hope." Inspired by such memories, we are bound to go forward and complete their work. Why should not saints of the industrial life, like Arnold Toynbee, and hand-to-hand warriors with city misery and wrong, like Edward Denison, rise up amongst us? We train for theology and preaching, why not for this more difficult enterprise? Why should not the churches seek out and employ thoroughly competent and social missionaries? Men who would make it their business to understand the questions of social economics, and to guide in their settlement. Some of you are making great fortunes; you are in danger of becoming, may I say it? wickedly rich, that is, of making more money than you can use as wise and faithful trustees for God and man; you may have sons and daughters filled with the spirit of the Saviour, and ready to give their lives in consecrated service either in the foreign field or at home. Why should you not say, "Go, give your heart to it, live in it, I will secure you against want, and may God prosper your work!"

In your homes, fathers and mothers, you have boy and girl life in its beauty and frankness, generous judgment and large sympathies. Take care you do not harden their hearts and narrow their spirit, but quicken their sense of social responsibility, fire them with public spirit that they may go forth to aid in the social work of the new generation.

O for men and women filled with the spirit of God and eager to do His will! We need many things in our churches and in our land, but this more than all. The Social Harvest truly is plenteous; but the labourers are few. Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he send forth labourers into His harvest.





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